

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SR-02 ORM-03 IO-13 /148 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1635

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION BERLIN

USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 10498

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR UR

SUBJECT: ANTI-DISSIDENT CAMPAIGN ENCOUNTERS PROBLEMS

1. SUMMARY: SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN HAVE JUMPED INTO THE BREACH AND TRANSFORMED CURRENT YAKIR-KRASIN TRIAL: INSTEAD OF THE PLANNED ANTI-CLIMACTIC QUASHING OF DEMOCRATIC DISSIDENT MOVEMENT, IT HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO THE FOCAL POINT OF WORLD ATTENTION TO SOVIET TREATMENT OF NONCONFORMISTS. IN RESPONDING TO THE ATTEMPT OF THE TWO DEMOCRATIC SPOKESMEN TO RESUSCITATE THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT, THE REGIME MAY HAVE HELPED ADVERTISE THE DISSIDENT CAUSE. IN ANY CASE, REGIME IS NOW FACED WITH OLD DILEMMA IN MORE ACUTE FORM: IN MOUNTING CAMPAIGN AGAINST SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN, REGIME MAY HAVE COMMITTED ITSELF TO EVENTUAL ACTIONS AGAINST THEM WHICH WILL CAUSE FURTHER DAMAGE TO ITS IMAGE ABROAD. WHOLE AFFAIR MAY ALSO HAVE RAMIFICATIONS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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INTERNAL DEBATE OVER PACE AND EXTENT OF DETENTE AND HOW TO KEEP RISING EXPECTATIONS FLOWING THEREFROM WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS. END SUMMARY

2. IN REGIME'S GAME PLAN, CURRENT TRIAL OF PYOTR YAKIR AND VIKTOR KRASIN WAS APPARENTLY DESIGNED AS MAJOR STEP IN LONG CAMPAIGN TO DISMEMBER THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT WHICH WAS BORN IN THE MID-SIXTIES.

3. APPARENT WATERSHED IN SOVIET CAMPAIGN WAS ARREST OF YAKIR IN JUNE 1972 AND SUBSEQUENT DETENTION OF KRASIN. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT YAKIR AND KRASIN, ALTHOUGH NOT LEADING INTELLECTUAL LIGHTS OF DISSIDENT MOVEMENT, DID FUNCTION AS ITS COHESIVE FIGURES. THEY THUS WERE NATURAL STARTING POINTS FOR FRONTAL ATTACK ON MOVEMENT. AUTHORITIES MAY HAVE CALCULATED THAT THEIR PAST EXPERIENCES IN LABOR CAMPS AND YAKIR'S CHRONIC ALCOHOLISM WOULD LEAD ONE OR BOTH TO BREAK AND THEREFORE PROVIDE OPENING TO DEMORALIZE AND NEUTRALIZE THE MOVEMENT.

4. BY END OF YEAR, YAKIR AND KRASIN REPORTEDLY HAD NOT ONLY ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR OWN GUILT, BUT HAD IMPLICATED OTHERS IN ALLEGED ANTI-STATE ACTIVITIES. IN RARE AND CAREFULLY MONITORED INTERVIEW WITH RELATIVES HELD BEFORE INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS COMPLETED, YAKIR PASSED WORD THAT ANOTHER DISSIDENT WOULD BE ARRESTED EACH TIME NEW ISSUE OF CHRONICAL OF CURRENT EVENTS APPEARED. TO BACK UP THREAT, AUTHORITIES ARRESTED IRENA BELEGORODSKAYA, REPORTEDLY A KEY FIGURE IN EDITING CHRONICLE. THESE MOVES HAD SERIOUS EFFECT ON MORALE OF DISSIDENTS AND LED TO DECISION TO SUSPEND PUBLICATION OF CHRONICLE.

5. CONCURRENTLY, SOVIETS ALSO TOOK OTHER STEPS TO CURTAIL INTERNAL DISSIDENCE. NUMBER OF PRINCIPAL JEWISH ACTIVISTS WITH LINKS TO DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT WERE PERMITTED TO EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL IN NOVEMBER 1972. LEADING DISSIDENTS SUCH AS ZHOES MEDVEDYEV, VALERIY CHALIDZE AND YURIY SINYAVSKIY WERE ALLOWED TO TRAVEL ABROAD; THE FIRST TWO SUBSEQUENTLY HAD THEIR SOVIET CITIZENSHIP REVOKED AND SINYAVSKIY HAS STATED THAT HE DOES NOT INTEND TO RETURN TO USSR. TO KEEP PRESSURE ON, DISSIDENTS BOTH IN MOSCOW AND OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY WERE HARASSED AND SOME, INCLUDING AMALRIK, WHO WAS JUST COMPLETING A TERM IN A LABOR CAMP, WERE ARRESTED AND RECEIVED RELATIVELY LENGTHY SENTENCES. CONFIDENTIAL

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DURING SAME PERIOD, SOVIETS ALSO CONTINUED PRACTICE OF USING FORCED PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT TO SILENCE DISSIDENTS.

6. IN CONTENDING WITH WORLD PUBLIC OPINION, REGIME TRIED TO KEEP PROCESS GRADUAL AND TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF FOREIGN TRAVELS OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENTS IN CSCE. ACCORDINGLY, TRIAL OF YAKIR AND KRASIN WAS DELAYED UNTIL AFTER BREZHNEV'S TRAVELS TO FRG, USA AND FRANCE AND CONCLUSION OF FIRST STAGE OF CSCE, EVEN THOUGH LENGTHY PRE-TRIAL DETENTION IS CLEAR VIOLATION OF SOVIET LAW.

7. MEANWHILE, SOVIETS ALSO BEGAN DOMESTIC MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO COUNTER REPORTS ON DISSIDENT ACTIVITY REACHING THE POPULATION THROUGH FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS. WHILE HAVING THE ADVANTAGE

OF GETTING THE SOVIET SIDE OF STORY OUT, THIS NEW DEPARTURE HAS HAD THE EFFECT OF PROVIDING SOVIET READERS WITH FAR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNAL DISSIDENCE THAN EVER BEFORE. IT WILL PROBABLY WHET THEIR CURIOSITY FOR MORE INFORMATION, IN A SOCIETY WHICH HAS LONG THRIVED ON WORD-OF-MOUTH NEWS.

8. YAKIR-KRASIN TRIAL MAY HAVE BEEN TIMED TO MINIMIZE RIPPLES IT WOULD CAUSE ON WORLD ARENA. WITH MUCH OF WORLD ON VACATION, AUTHORITIES APPARENTLY CALCULATED THAT TIME WAS RIPE TO COMPLETE WHAT THEY HAD STARTED. AS THEY SAW SCENARIO, TRIAL WOULD CONCENTRATE ON PROFESSIONS OF GUILT OF ACCUSED AND THEIR REPENTENCE, WITH STRESS ON FACT THAT ACCUSED REPRESENTED INFINTESIMAL, MISGUIDED MINORITY WELL OUTSIDE MAINSTREAM OF SOVIET LIFE. TO REDUCE REVERBERATIONS ON UPCOMING SECOND STAGE OF CSCE, COURT COULD HAND DOWN LIGHT SENTENCES THUS DEMONSTRATING "HUMANENESS" OF SOVIET SYSTEM. (IN FACT, RELATIVELY LIGHT SENTENCES--THREE YEARS IN LABOR CAMP FOLLOWED BY THREE YEARS OF EXILE--WERE RECOMMENDED BY PROSECUTOR AND ACCEPTED BY COURT.)

9. GAME PLAN SEEMS TO HAVE GONE AWRY DUE TO ACTIONS BY SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN. HARASSMENT OF TWO DURING PAST FEW MONTHS PROBABLY WAS AIMED AT INTIMIDATING THEM, BUT THIS MAY HAVE BEEN TACTICAL ERROR. THE PAIR MAY HAVE FELT BACKED INTO ISOLATED CORNER, AND THUS REGARDED INTERNATIONAL DISSEMINATION OF THEIR VIEWS, COINCIDENT WITH APPROACHING TRIAL AND SECOND STAGE OF CSCE, AS THEIR BEST DEFENSE. WHATEVER THE REASONS, RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF BOTH, COUPLED WITH CURRENT TRIAL, HAVE SERVED TO FOCUS WORLD ATTENTION ON CURRENT TRIAL AND GENERAL CONFIDENTIAL

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QUESTION OF TIGHT INTERNAL CONTROLS IN SOVIET UNION. SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN MAY THUS HAVE BREATHED NEW LIFE INTO DISSIDENT MOVEMENT. DISSIDENTS REPORTEDLY ARE PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH SOLZHENITSYN'S DEFENSE OF OTHERS, IN CONTRAST TO EARLIER OCCASIONS WHEN HE RESTRICTED HIMSELF TO HIS OWN PLIGHT.

10. FOR MOMENT REGIME FACES DILEMMA. INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE OF SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN AND FORTHCOMING CSCE APPARENTLY PRECLUDE AUTHORITIES FROM SUMMARILY TAKING JUDICIAL ACTION AGAINST THEM. FOR TIME BEING, THE TWO ARE MERELY SUBJECTED TO PUBLIC CAMPAIGN OF VILIFICATION IN ATTEMPT TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY ARE OUTSIDE MAINSTREAM OF SOVIET LIFE. SOVIET ARGUMENT THAT PAIR ARE OPPOSED TO DETENTE SHOULD BE USEFUL TOOL IN THIS EFFORT. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT WILL FOLLOW, HOWEVER. IN ADDITION TO POSSIBLE STEP-UP IN ADMINISTRATIVE HARASSMENT, THERE IS ALSO IMPLIED THREAT OF CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS, SINCE PUBLISHED DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR ACTIONS PUT THEM WITHIN PURVIEW OF VIOLATIONS OF SOVIET CRIMINAL CODE. THE AUTHORITIES EVENTUALLY MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT NOT TO TAKE FURTHER STEPS AGAINST THE TWO; HAVING PUBLICLY REVEALED IN SOME MEASURE THE EXTENT OF THEIR HERESIES, FAILURE TO PUBLISH OR EXTRACT RECANTATION FROM THEM WOULD BE

NOTED BY SOVIET CITIZENRY WHOSE ATTENTION HAS NOW BEEN DRAWN TO THE CASES.

11. CURRENT DRAMA HAS YET TO RUN ITS COURSE. IMMEDIATE QUESTION IS HOW AUTHORITIES WILL DEAL WITH INDIVIDUALS AS PRESTIGIOUS AS SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN. LONGER TERM CONCERN IS FATE OF DISSIDENT MOVEMENT. IMPORTANT ASPECT IS IMPACT OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS ON DETENTE. IN ADDITION TO REVERBATIONS IN CSCE AND US CONGRESS, THERE MAY ALSO BE RAMIFICATIONS FOR INTERNAL SOVIET DEBATE OVER PACE OF DETENTE, AND ADVISABILITY OF EXPANSION OF CONTACTS ASPECTS. THE BREZHNEV REGIME UNDOUBTEDLY FEELS CONSTRAINED TO SHOW IT CAN DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERNAL DISSIDENCE EVEN IN CONDITIONS OF DETENTE, BUT THE SAKHAROV-SOLZHENITSYN MOVES MAY HAVE UPSET ITS GAME PLAN AND FACED IT WITH HARD CHOICE BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL IMPERATIVES.
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